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HOMEWARD BOUND

GHOST MANOR

GHOST MANOR Vol. 2, No. 3, February, 1972.

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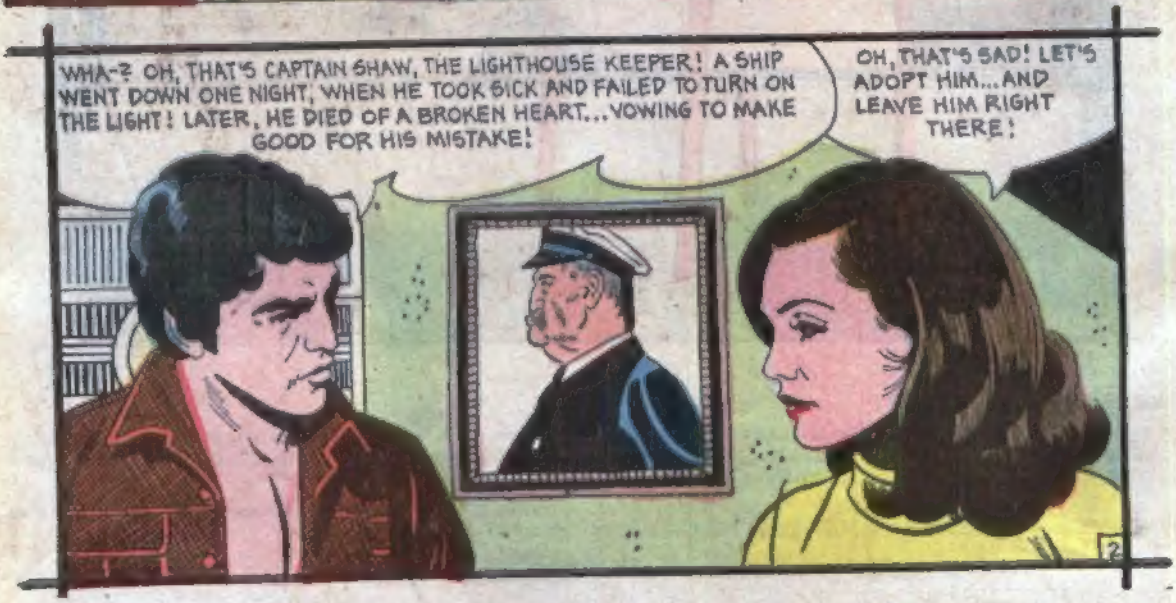
THERE IT IS, LUELLA, OUR NEW DIGS! THINK YOU CAN MAKE A HOME OUT OF AN OLD UNUSED LIGHTHOUSE?
I'M GAME IF YOU ARE, MIKE! LET'S TAKE A LOOK INSIDE!

WELL, NOW... IT LOOKS LIKE I MARRIED A REAL ADVENTURESS... EAGER TO EXPLORE NEW HORIZONS!
NO-FAIR TRYING TO GET OUT OF IT NOW... I GOT YOU FAIR... AND YOU'RE HOOKED!

HEY, THIS ISN'T BAD! A LITTLE ELBOW WORK WILL DO WONDERS HERE!
LET'S SEE WHAT THE TOWER LOOKS LIKE!

MMMM... THIS EQUIPMENT IS IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE! REMIND ME TO LOOK IT OVER, SOMEDAY!
MIKE, I THOUGHT YOU SAID WE WERE ALONE ON THIS ISLAND!


WHA-? OH, THAT'S CAPTAIN SHAW, THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER! A SHIP WENT DOWN ONE NIGHT, WHEN HE TOOK SICK AND FAILED TO TURN ON THE LIGHT! LATER, HE DIED OF A BROKEN HEART... VOWING TO MAKE GOOD FOR HIS MISTAKE!
OH, THAT'S SAD! LET'S ADOPT HIM... AND LEAVE HIM RIGHT THERE!

SO, A BUSY DAY GIVES WAY TO NIGHT, AND THE NECESSITY OF SLEEP!
MIKE... THAT CRASHING SOUND... DID YOU HEAR IT?
UH-HUH... IT CAME FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND! I'LL SEE WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!
GOOD LORD... A CARGO SHIP... CAUGHT ON THE ROCKS!
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT THERE... TRY AND HELP THE CREW! HEY... SOMETHING'S WRONG!
MY HANDS... COVERED WITH ...ANTS!
5

ARRRGH... THERE... THERE ARE THOUSANDS... MILLIONS OF THEM... COMING FROM THE SHIP... LIKE AN INVADING ARMY!
EVEN AS MIKE BACKED OFF, HE SAW A PATTERN TAKING SHAPE, AS THE RELENTLESS ANTS SWARMED ALONG THE COAST LINE, TO SURROUND THE ISLAND!
THAT CARGO SHIP MUST HAVE BEEN CARRYING SAMPLES OF ANT LIFE BACK TO THE STATES, WHEN THE CREATURES GOT LOOSE, AND TOOK OVER! THEY'VE BEEN REPRODUCING EVER SINCE... AND THEY COULD HAVE BEEN AT SEA FOR MONTHS!
GOT TO GET TO LUELLA! WE DON'T STAND MUCH OF A CHANCE... WITHOUT A PHONE OR RADIO!
4

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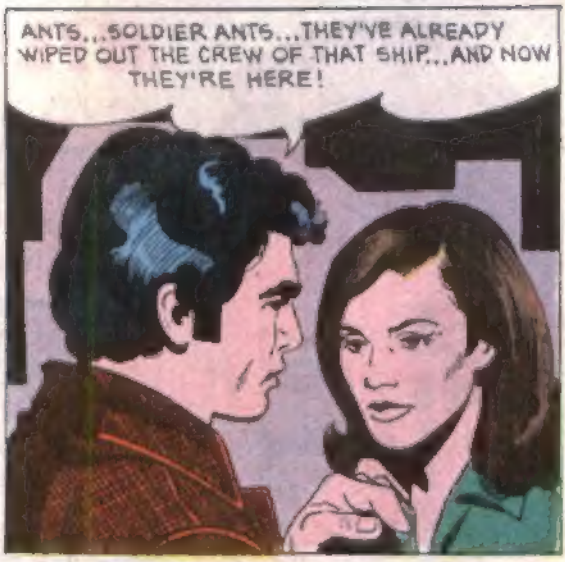
LUELLA...GET BACK INSIDE THE HOUSE! WE'VE GOT BIG TROUBLES!
I KNOW...I WAS WATCHING FROM THE TOWER! WHAT ARE THOSE CREATURES?


ANTS...SOLDIER ANTS...THEY'VE ALREADY WIPED OUT THE CREW OF THAT SHIP...AND NOW THEY'RE HERE!

WHAT... WHAT CAN WE DO?
OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO GET THE LIGHT WORKING IN THE TOWER... AND SIGNAL THE MAIN LAND FOR HELP!

OKAY, THE FUSES ARE SET... HERE GOES EVERYTHING!

THE GENERATORS TURN, AND A HUMMING SOUND PRECEEDS THE BRILLIANT LIGHT THAT BEAMS FORTH!

THEN, THE HUMMING STOPS...AND THE DARKNESS THAT WAS BEFORE, IS ONCE AGAIN!

FINALLY, AS THE LIGHT STRUGGLES LIKE A THING ALIVE, A CONSTANT ERRATIC BEAM FLICKERS IN THE NIGHT!

I'VE FAILED, HONEY... THERE ISN'T MUCH I CAN DO WITH A FLICKERING LIGHT!
YOU TRIED, MIKE... JUST LIKE CAPTAIN SHAW! AT LEAST...WE'LL BE HERE TOGETHER!

THE SOLDIER ANTS (MORE POWERFUL AND FASTER THAN THE ORDINARY SPECIES) THAT SURROUNDED THE COAST LINE, BEGIN THEIR INWARD MARCH, DEVOURING EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH...LIKE AN OCEAN WAVE RUSHING TO THE SHORE!

ALTHOUGH BLIND, THE CREATURES MOVE IN A PATTERN, EVER TIGHTENING THE CIRCLE THAT CLOSES IN ON THE LIGHTHOUSE, SOMEHOW AWARE OF THE FACT *THAT LIFE EXISTS THERE!*

THEY'RE COMING!

LUELLA...LISTEN...DO YOU HEAR THAT?
A HELICOPTER, LADEN WITH INSECTICIDE, SPRAYS IT'S DEADLY CARGO ON THE SWARMING SOLDIER ANTS!
FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, THE COPTER LANDS!
THAT'LL HOLD 'EM 'TILL THE OTHER COPTERS GET HERE! GOOD THING WE GOT YOUR MESSAGE ON THE MAIN LAND... THAT WAS MIGHTY CLOSE!
MESSAGE? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
LET'S SEE, GOT IT HERE SOMEPLACE! PRETTY SMART IDEA, MAKING THAT LIGHTHOUSE BEAM FLICKER, SO'S YOU COULD SEND MORSE CODE SIGNALS WITH DOTS AN' DASHES!
HERE IT IS, IT READS, 'SEND HELP, SOLDIER ANTS ARE ATTACKING LIGHTHOUSE! URGENT!' AN' IT'S SIGNED 'CAPTAIN SHAW!'
SEND HELP, SOLD
ANTS ARE
LIG
WELL, WELL, WELL, I GUESS OLD CAPTAIN SHAW CAN REST EASY ...NOW THAT HE GOT HIS GOOD DEED DONE, EH, DEAR FRIEND?
END

THE CURSE OF THE HANGING MAN
ON A CASTLE WALL IN NORTHERN ENGLAND, TO THIS DAY THERE IS A FAINT OUTLINE OF A HANGING MAN...DATING FROM 1592 WHEN AN EARLIER ELIZABETH WAS QUEEN OF ENGLAND...AND THE DUKE OF MARBRY OCCUPIED THE CASTLE!
THE HANGED MAN WAS A SERF...ONE OF THE GYPSIES ROAMING ENGLAND AT THAT TIME...SENTENCED BY THE DUKE FOR A CRIME HE DID NOT COMMIT...
YOU ACCUSE ME OF A CRIME I DID NOT COMMIT! IF YOU EXECUTE ME... YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN WILL BE CURSED!
TAKE THE RASCAL AWAY! HANG HIM WHEN THE SUN TOPS EAST HILL...IF HE DIDN'T STEAL THE HORSES, HE PROBABLY STOLE SOMETHING ELSE!
STATON & NICK
AT SUN-UP, THE DUKE STILL SLEPT ...BUT HIS SERVANTS DUTIFULLY CARRIED OUT HIS ORDERS!
GLAD I BE NOT THE DUKE...FOR THE GYPSY HAD THE EVIL EYE...AND MARBRY WILL LIVE TO LEARN IT TO HIS SORROW!
D-2066
1

MARBRY FORGOT THE GYPSY...HE NEVER EVEN KNEW HIS NAME!
YE'RE DRINKING THE LAST OF THE CLARET, M'LORD! WE'LL HAVE NAUGHT TO DRINK! I'LL KICK ONE OF THE SERVANTS AWAKE!
NAY, WENCH...I KNOW ME WAY T' THE WINE CELLAR! I'LL FETCH A FLAGON O' THE FINEST GRAPE!
PORT...CHABLIS... WHERE'S THE BLAST-ED CLARET?
BLAST YOUR LIVER AND LIGHTS, WHAT ARE YOU D...NO! THIS CANNOT BE!
EEEE
HE...HE'S DEAD!

THERE WAS NO PHYSICIAN TO CALL...BUT THE DUKE OF MARBRY'S SON HAD LITTLE DOUBT WHAT KILLED HIS FATHER WHEN HE VIEWED THE BODY!
HE DIDNA DIE OF AN INJURY, MASTER CHARLES!
LOOK AT HIS EYES, MAN...'TIS PLAIN WHAT CAUSED HIS DEATH!
MY FATHER DIED OF UNBEARABLE FEAR! HIS HEART GAVE OUT!
MARBRY'S SON, THE SIXTH DUKE OF THAT NAME, WAS A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK...
CHARLIE, YOU'RE A FINE LAD!
I'LL BE A MARRIED LAD A FORTNIGHT HENCE...
...THEY'VE MATCHED ME WITH THE EARL OF PENFORTH'S DAUGHTER...SHE'S A SKINNY WENCH WITH A SHARP TONGUE BUT I'VE NO CHOICE!
AYE...SHE'S A BONNIE LASS...AND SHE'LL MAKE A HANDSOME WIDOW...THE GYPSY'S CURSE WILL FALL UPON HIM, TOO!
SO, THE MATCH WAS MADE...THE WEDDING BANS READ...AND THEN THE YOUNG DUKE WAS WED!
3

CONTINUED AFTER THE NEXT PAGE

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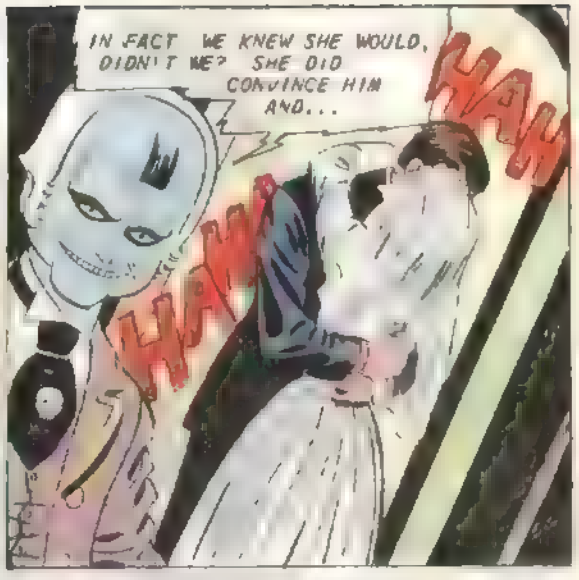
CHARLIE, THE VI DUKE, WAS AWARE OF THE GYPSY CURSE... AND HE WENT CAUTIOUSLY, THEREBY AVOIDING DEATH MANY TIMES...
A MOMENT, YOUR GRACE...
DEAR HEAVEN!
KRAAASSHH!!
I'VE BEEN EXPECTING THAT TO FALL FOR MORE THAN A YEAR!
CHARLES, VI DUKE OF MARBRY, ARRANGED HIS OWN DEATH...DURING A QUARREL OVER CARDS!
YOU'RE A FOOL TO CALL ME A CHEAT, CYRIL! YOU WEAR A SWORD...YOU'D BEST KNOW HOW TO USE IT!
SLAP!
EN GARDE, CYRIL!
BLEED HIM A LITTLE, CHARLIE, SO WE CAN GO ON WITH OUR GAME!
THE OTHERS SAW ONLY FAT, HARMLESS CYRIL...TOO PUDGY AND COWARDLY TO WIELD HIS SWORD! BUT CHARLES OF MARBRY SAW HIS TRUE OPPONENT... IN THE LAST SECOND OF HIS LIFE!
IT'S Y.... AAAGGGHH!

DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES, THE MARBRY MEN DIED BEFORE THEIR TIME...
I SAW...YOUNG HORACE CAME A CROPPER!
Y-YOU...THE CURSE OF THE MARBRYS!
YES, MARBRY... THE CURSE OF AN INNOCENT MAN!
HE PROWLED MARBRY HALL DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES...
BUT WHY WON'T YOU MARRY ME, CHARLES? WE LOVE EACH OTHER...
BECAUSE SHORTLY AFTER I MARRY, DELLA...THE CURSE OF THE MARBRY CLAN WOULD TURN YOU INTO A WIDOW!

NONSENSE, CHARLES! WE'RE NOT LETTING A STUPID 400 YEAR OLD SUPERSTITION KEEP US APART!
YOU ALMOST CONVINCE ME, MY DEAR!


IN FACT WE KNEW SHE WOULD, DIDN'T WE? SHE DID CONVINCE HIM AND...
HAH
HAH

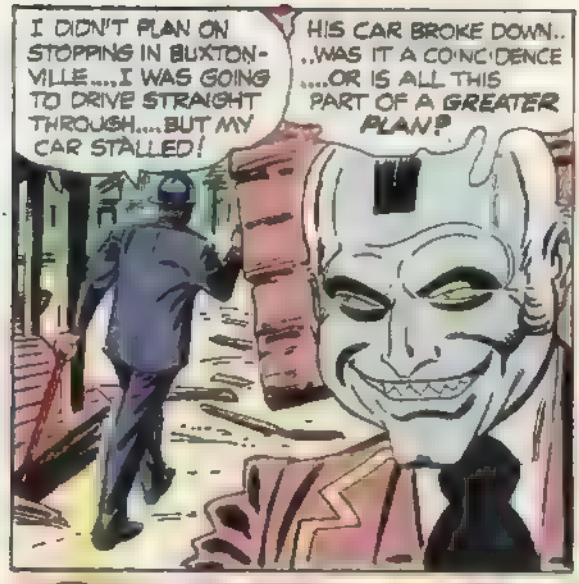
DELLA, LISTEN TO ME! WE DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN MARBRY HALL LET'S EMIGRATE TO CANADA OR AUSTRALIA!
WE SHALL NOT! WE SHALL LIVE LONG HAPPY LIVES HERE IN MARBRY HALL!

YOU WILL BE THE LAST OF YOUR LINE, DESCENDANT OF A MURDERER!
6

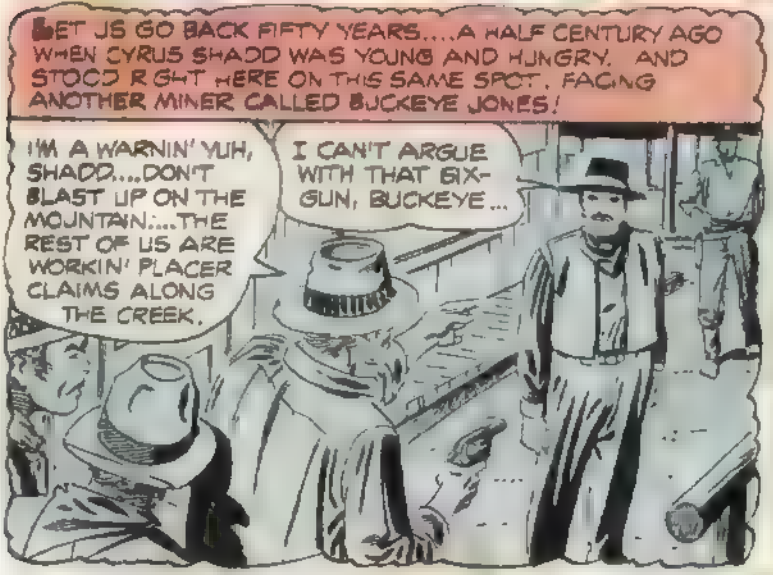
HAHA
HAHAHAHA

HE WILL NOT AWAKEN, CURSE OF THE MARBRY MEN... STAND FAST, DO NOT TRY TO HIDE FROM ME!
WHO BE YOU TO TALK IN THIS MANNER! I CAN DESTROY YOU AS WELL AS...
I CAN INVOKE THE POWERS OF WITCHCRAFT ALTHOUGH I HAVE NEVER DONE SO BEFORE, GYPSY! I KNOW YOU CLAIMED INNOCENCE...AND HAVE DESTROYED CHARLES OF MARBRY AND HIS DESCENDANTS FOR NIGH FOUR HUNDRED YEARS ...BUT YOU WERE NOT INNOCENT OF THAT CRIME!
YOU LIE! I...
YOU STOLE HORSES FROM THE MARBRY STABLES THE YEAR BEFORE MARBRY ACCUSED YOU AND HANGED YOU FOR THE CRIME! DARE YOU DENY IT TO ME?
YES, BUT...NAY, DO NOT DO IT TO ME!
BEGONE, EVIL PRESENCE... AND NEVER RETURN!
FOOF!
DELLA...WHAT IS GOING ON?
I DREAMED THE MARBRY CURSE WAS ABOUT TO BEFALL ME!
YOU HAD A NIGHTMARE, DARLING...YOU'LL NEVER HAVE IT AGAIN!
END

THE WAITING NOOSE
D-2352
THIS IS A GHOST TOWN....HERE, LUSTY MEN LAUGHED AND CRIED AND FOUGHT DUELS WITH GUNS AND KNIVES AND FISTS...WOMEN SHARED THEIR LOT... BUT NOW IT'S STILL.... IT'S OVER! LISTEN. AS CYRUS T. SHADD SEEMS TO LISTEN.. PERHAPS YOU CAN HEAR THE GHOSTLY ECHOES OF ANOTHER NIGHT FIFTY YEARS AGO WHEN MEN CRIED AND CURSED AT THIS MAN FOR SMASHING THEIR GOLDEN DREAMS!
SHADD IS BACK! SEND WORD TO THE VIGILANTES... HE WON'T GET AWAY THIS TIME!
THE FOOLS.. ...I WARNED THEM....THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE I'D DO IT!


I DIDN'T PLAN ON STOPPING IN BUXTON-VILLE....I WAS GOING TO DRIVE STRAIGHT THROUGH....BUT MY CAR STALLED!
HIS CAR BROKE DOWN.. ..WAS IT A CO-INCIDENCE ....OR IS ALL THIS PART OF A GREATER PLAN?

HERE IT IS.... FADED, TAWDRY, SHABBY....THEY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A THRIV NG CITY ONE DAY.... BUT I FIXED THAT!


LET US GO BACK FIFTY YEARS....A HALF CENTURY AGO WHEN CYRUS SHADD WAS YOUNG AND HUNGRY. AND STOOD R GHT HERE ON THIS SAME SPOT, FACING ANOTHER MINER CALLED BUCKEYE JONES!
I'M A WARNIN' YUH, SHADD....DON'T BLAST UP ON THE MOUNTAIN....THE REST OF US ARE WORKIN' PLACER CLAIMS ALONG THE CREEK.
I CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT SIX-GUN, BUCKEYE...

WATCH OUT, BUCKEYE...THAT SNEAK'S CARRYIN' A HIDE-OUT GUN!

ONLY A FOOL MAKES A THREAT AND THEN TURNS HIS BACK!

VIGILANTES! MEET IN WERNER'S LIVERY BARN IN TEN MINUTES!

CY SHADD SHOT BUCK-EYE JONES IN THE BACK! THE WHOLE TOWN SEED HIM DO IT....LET'S GO GET 'IM....
THE ROPE IS WAITIN'... WE'LL HANG SHAD BEFORE NOON TOMORROW!
BUT FEAR DROVE CYRUS T SHADD AT A BREAKNECK PACE. UP THE MOUNTAIN TO WHERE HE'D BEEN SEEKING GOLD!
I'VE LOCATED THE MOTHER LODE...BUT I WAS AFRAID TO USE DYNA-MITE BECAUSE THE TOWN AND THE PLACER CLAIMS ARE DOWN BELOW!
NOW, IT DOESN'T MATTER! THEY'LL HANG ME IF I DO.. AND HANG ME IF I DON'T!
THE VIGILANTES WERE 300 FEET BELOW....
HE'S UP THERE.... HE CAN'T GET AWAY FROM US NOW!
I'LL HAVE A TON OF PURE GOLD! WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT THOSE OTHER FOOLS DOWN THERE!
WHOOM!
HAHAHAHAHA!
BAROOOM!
3

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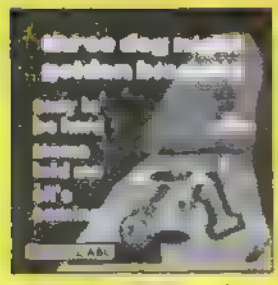
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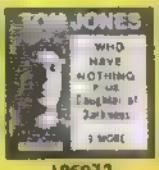

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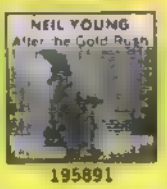

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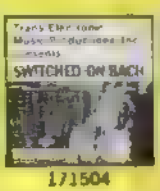

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Fantastic bonus plan. Your only obligation is to buy seven selections during the coming year. After doing so, you have no further obligation — and you may cancel membership at any time. If you decide to continue, you will be eligible for our generous bonus plan — which can save you at least 33% on all your future purchases! Act now!

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☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss

(Please Print) First Name Initial Last Name

Address.....

City

State Zip Code

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APO, FPO addresses, write for special offer

SHADD'S BLAST UNCOVERED THE MOTHER LODE, ALL RIGHT... BUT THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN COLLAPSED INTO THE RIVER... BURYING THE VIGILANTES BENEATH A MILLION TONS OF ROCK!
SHADD DID IT....HE WIPED OUT MY CLAIM...KILLED MOST OF THE GROWN MEN IN TOWN....THERE'S NOTHIN' TO KEEP ME HERE NOW!
IT WAS THERE... THE MOTHER LODE!
THERE WERE TOUGHS IN BUXTONVILLE...CYRUS T SHADD PAID THEM WELL TO GUARD HIM FROM THE OUTRAGED CITIZENS; HE HAD HIS NOW....HE NEVER LOOKED BACK!
I'LL DOUBLE YOUR PAY WHEN WE REACH DENVER!
SO BUXTONVILLE BECAME A GHOST TOWN....A MEMORIAL TO THE MEN CYRUS SHADD HAD KILLED TO ACQUIRE HIS FIRST MILLION!
NOW, BUXTONVILLE WAS ABANDONED... ...WIND WHISPERED THROUGH THE WARPED OLD BOARDS...AT NIGHT COYOTES PROWLED THE SILENT STREET....

WHILE FAR AWAY, CYRUS T. SHADD WAS GETTING RICHER!
NOW, WHEN HE'S 70, CYRUS T. SHADD IS BACK IN THE WEST....HE'S STAYING AT A LUXURY HOTEL....WITH THE KIND OF FRIENDS WHO ALWAYS FLOCK AROUND ANYONE AS RICH AS CYRUS T. SHADD!
YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DRIVE TO THIS GHOST TOWN ALONE SIR? THE HOTEL WILL SUPPLY A CHAUFFEUR IF.
THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGAN, CHARLEY! THIS IS MY OLD STAMPING GROUNDS!
I SHOULD TURN BACK.....I WON'T REACH BUXTONVILLE BEFORE DARK NOW!
IT LOOKS WEIRD ..I ALMOST IMAGINE I HEAR HONKY-TONK PIANO MUSIC....AND MEN LAUGHING!
HERE WE GO ... CYRUS T. SHADD IS OUT OF HIS CAR.. ..STANDING WHERE HE STOOD SO LONG AGO ON THAT NIGHT WHEN THE .50 CALIBER DERRINGER HAD BROUGHT ABOUT THE DEATH OF BUCKEYE JONES!
HURRY UP! THE VIGILANTES GOT TO HANG THAT MAN FOR KILLIN' ME.
I WONDER WHO OWNS IT ALL NOW? I THINK I'LL TELL CHARLIE TO FIND OUT AND BUY IT UP FOR ME!
5

LOOK! THOSE MEN IN THE BLACK HOODS..... THEY'RE CARRYING TORCHES.....
HURRY UP MEN! SHADD'S GONNA PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO US...AND BUXTONVILLE.
SHADD! YUH DIRTY, DOUBLE-CROSSIN' TINHORN....
THAT VOICE ... IT'S FAMILIAR.... IT'S....
REMEMBER ME, SHADD? YUH MURDERED ME IN COLD BLOOD.... NOW, YUH'RE GONNA HANG FOR IT!
YOU'RE NOT R-REAL.... THIS IS 1971.....YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM LEAVING.
LET'S SEE HOW REAL I AM, SHADD!
6

LOOK, I'M RICH.. . LET ME GO....I'LL GIVE YOU A MILLION DOLLARS!
WE CAN'T SPEND YOUR MONEY, SHADD.. ALL WE CAN DO IS CARRY OUT THE SENTENCE FOR WHAT YUH DID FIFTY YEARS AGO!
THIS ISN'T LEGAL! I'VE GOT LAWYERS . I'LL RAZE THIS TOWN TO THE GROUND, I ..
SHADD, YUH MURDER-IN' COWARD, YUH SHOT BUCKEYE JONES IN COLD BLOOD. YUH BLASTED THE MOUNTAIN DOWN ON US.. . YUH RUINED THIS TOWN....AN' YUH GOT TO PAY!
MURDOCK: ..GET A ROPE!
FOR FIFTY YEARS YUH BEEN LIVIN HIGH ON WHAT YUH STOLE OUTA HERE SHADD! NOW IT'S OVER....YUH'RE GONNA HANG!
N-NO..... IT CAN'T HAPPEN.. ...YOU'RE ALL GHOSTS.... I'M IMAGINING ALL THIS!

IT'S THE SENTENCE OF THE VIGILANTE COMMITTEE, SHADD, THAT YOU BE HANGED BY THE NECK TILL YUH'RE DEAD!
SOB
YAAGGGH!

AT THE LUXURY HOTEL, CYRUS T. SHADD IS BEING SEARCHED FOR... HELICOPTERS ARE OUT... AND ONE OF THEM HOVERS OVER THE GHOST TOWN OF BUXTONVILLE!
THERE'S MR. SHADD'S CAR....IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S BEEN TROUBLE!
MR. SHADD, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? MR. SHADD, WHAT HAPPENED?
HE CAN'T ANSWER YOU, SIR....CAN'T YOU SEE? HE DOESN'T EVEN HEAR YOUR VOICE!
KNOW WHAT I CAN'T UNDERSTAND?
WHERE DID THAT BRAND-NEW GALLOWS ROPE COME FROM? WHO PUT IT THERE?
END.

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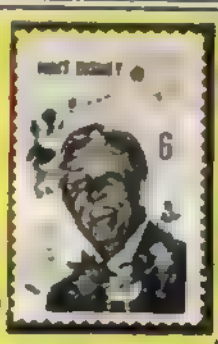

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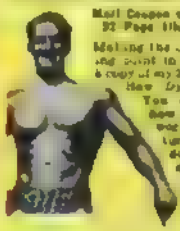

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The Spirit of Speekie Speaks

For a quarter of a century, John Mauser was a ventriloquist. He did his act in hundreds of small hotels over the country. And from time to time he did appear on T. V. His dummy was a favorite with kids. He was called "Speekie." Usually dressed in a clown's outfit, John Mauser would put the dummy on his lap and talk to him. And the dummy would answer. From time to time, the ventriloquist would smoke or drink a glass of water. And at the same time talk. At the end of his routine he would place the dummy in a suitcase. And the closing remarks would be something like this:

"I want to entertain some more. Please don't put me away in this dark place."

"You can't keep the kids up so late. They won't be able to get up in the morning."

"The morning was made for kids to get up early or late. It is up to them."

"You mean it is up to them to be up?"

It was a Saturday evening. John Mauser followed his routine. When he was finished he met some men who suggested a game of poker. And according to the testimony he played cards until about four in the morning. He was a big winner. The stakes were high. And when the game was over he was ahead more than three thousand dollars in cash. His last words were remembered.

"Gentlemen, tomorrow you can have a chance to win back your losses."

At three the next afternoon, Hilda Shummer, the chambermaid put her key into the lock of his room. If he wanted to continue alone and sleep some more, he had a lock chain to keep the door rightly closed. She opened the door and saw his body on the floor in a pool of blood. She screamed. Ran down to the desk and reported what had happened.

This is where I come into the story. The name is Lieutenant Frank Boyle. We have a small village police force of twenty three men. I went to the hotel. We called the coroner. He made his report. A heavy metal object had been used to crush in the skull. Death must have taken place at once. We were informed of his winnings. A search showed no money. So robbery was the motive. According to the procedure we sealed the room. We questioned the card players. At least one would have the motive. Namely to recover his winnings. All had alibis to some extent.

At four in the afternoon of the next day, myself, the coroner - Bill Natarman, and Jim Pearson the reporter of our local newspaper were in that room. The body had been removed. The dummy was sitting on the top of a dresser.

"If the dummy could only talk. I guess we could learn the identity of the killer," I said.

"I have seen his act many times," added Bill Natarman. "And the dummy seemed to be human. Now he is alone. They were so close to each other."

Jim Pearson walked up to "Speekie." Shook hands with him. Then spoke to him.

"You must have seen everything. Of course if it were dark, I figure you can't tell us the identity of the killer. But if you could only speak then you could help us punish the man who killed your best friend."

"Who says I can't speak?" came from the mouth of the dummy. And the jaws moved up and down as he spoke. Exactly the same way as when John Mauser manipulated him from the back.

We had all heard that voice before. We were rooted to the floor. And we were scared. This couldn't be! There must be some kind of a trick. Maybe a tape recorder hidden in the dummy.

"This is no trick," continued the dummy. "There is no tape inside of me. I lived only through my friend and master. He is dead and so am I. But the voice you hear is coming to you from beyond the grave. Death is not the end of Life as you know it. It is merely a door that opens to another kind of eternal Life. The good are rewarded. And those who commit evil are punished.

None of the card players killed me. Though one of them, Jeff Kinzer, did have the thought in his mind of trying to rob me to get back his money. He lost every cent he had with him. Serves him right at that. He tried to deal a card off the bottom of the deck. But it didn't work. I will tell you who killed me. It was the night porter, Mike as he is known. I remained alone in the card room. Mike came in to clean up. I gave him a five dollar bill as a tip. He saw the many bills in my hand.

I was very tired. I did not double lock my door. I didn't use the lock chain at all. He went to the hall closet and got the pass key. Then took an old iron and smashed my head with it. The money was in my wallet and in my coat pockets. Go into his room. He has hidden it inside the mattress of his bed."

The three of us rushed out of the room. I found Mike in the lobby. The coroner and the reporter went to Mike's room. Ripped the mattress apart and found the money. Mike was given his constitutional warnings. But he confessed to the killing. When we came back to the room of the late John Mauser, which had been locked - the dummy was missing!

You can do your best to figure out what must have happened. We three are certain of this: The voice did come from beyond the grave. The dummy saw everything. And it only vanished to join his master in the world beyond.

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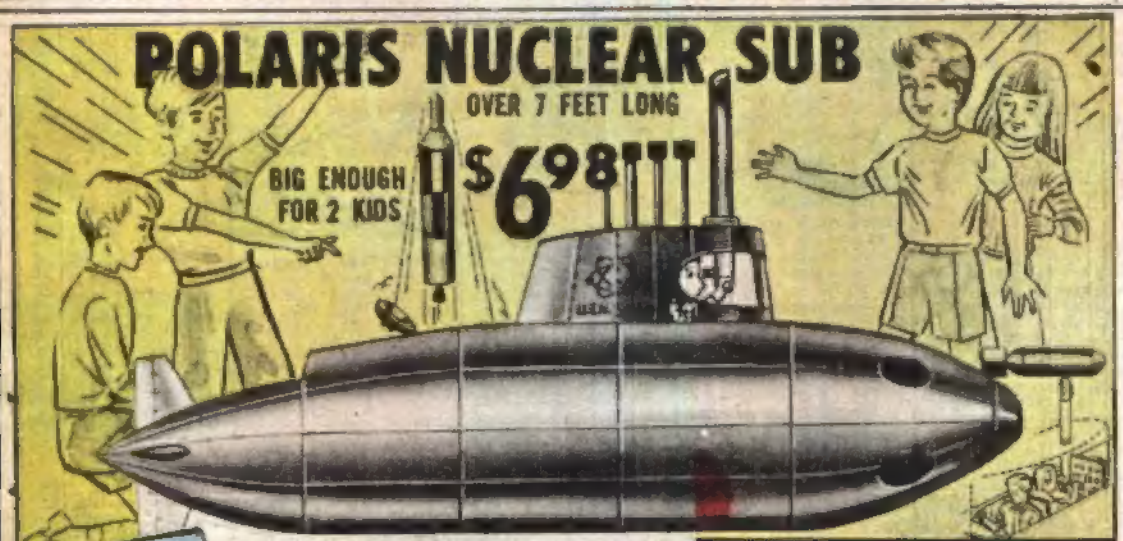

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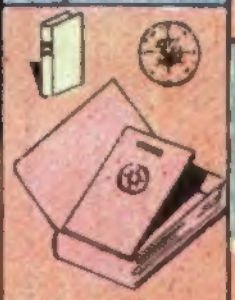

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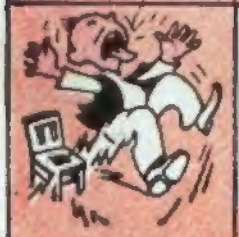

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